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DE RUEHKI #0611 2071059
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 251059Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTAT WASHDC 8228
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2173
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000611

SIPDIS

PASS TO DOL/ILAB (TMCCARTER)
DEPT FOR DRL/IL (TDANG)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EINV](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: DRC: 2007 WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

REF: 07 SECSTATE 149662

¶1. (U) Summary. The GDRC needs to make greater progress in combating the worst forms of child labor, as reflected by information that has been obtained for the first year of the new government. The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws, but lacks the necessary capacity and resources to do so. End Summary.

CHILD LABOR LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN THE DRC

¶2. (U) The GDRC created the National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (NCCL) in June 2006, but is still unable to carry out its mandate. The Committee's goals are to develop and assure the implementation of a national strategy to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

APPLICATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS

¶3. (U) Child labor law enforcement remains inadequate, particularly in the mining sector. Children work illegally as artisanal miners and in other informal sectors. (See also Post's 2007 Human Rights Report.) Increasing industrialization in the extractive industries sector will likely focus public attention and scrutiny on reducing the number of children working in this sector. The government's capacity and willingness to meaningfully participate in such efforts are unclear, and many firms operating in the sector, including Chinese and Indian-owned operations, have thus far shown little inclination to promote compliance with child labor laws. (Note: A USAID contractor has entered into a partnership with select international mining firms - so far only in Katanga province - that have committed themselves to reducing the number of child miners in the DRC. End note.)

¶4. (U) The DRC's Ministry of Labor remains the responsible body for investigating child labor abuses, but there is no dedicated child labor inspection service. NGO's continued to pressure the Ministry of Labor to focus on this problem, with few or no results.

¶5. (U) The DRC's criminal courts will continue to hear child labor complaints until the NCCL forms. NGO's and the ILO have reportedly been active in pushing prosecutors to bring cases against violators of child labor laws.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

¶6. (U) The GDRC continued to demobilize child soldiers in 2007 through the disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion (DDR) program. The reduction of funding specifically available for child demobilization has almost certainly resulted in a decrease of the number of NGO's focusing on this process. UNICEF estimates that

11,000 children still need to be demobilized, while the UNDP's estimates are more than twice that figure.

17. (U) The relatively high financial costs and loss of potential income for education continue to push children into the informal labor sector, because many parents are unable to simultaneously pay school fees and give up the income their children may earn to help support the family. For budgetary and political reasons, the Ministry of Education has been unable to implement plans, announced in 2005, to fund teachers' salaries, an action that would have eliminated, at least in theory, the need for parents to pay the teachers. The USG continues to support programs to reduce the educational gap between boys and girls and to increase school attendance.

COMMENT AND PROGRESS REPORT

18. (U) We have not observed major progress by the GDRC in combating child labor since 2006. Enforcement continues to be lax due to institutionalized corruption and bureaucratic disorganization. Child labor, especially in the artisanal mining sector, is likely to remain a significant challenge for the new government.

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